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Two Dramatic Episodes of New England Whaling

By

Sidney Withington

The Marine Historical Association, Inc.
Mystic, Connecticut

Desk now in the White House made of teak from the timbers of *Resolute*.

Photo by Abbie Rowe. Courtesy National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

Two Dramatic Episodes

of

New England Whaling

The *George Henry* and the Salvage and Restoration
of H. M. S. *Resolute*

The Sinking of the two "*Stone Fleets*"
during the Civil War

By

Sidney Withington

THE MARINE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, Inc.
Mystic, Connecticut

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Foreword

The two unusual accounts of maritime adventure contained in this book are not in themselves purely whaling incidents. And yet, because they involve whaleships they point out in dramatic fashion the fact that whalemen and whaleships were often called upon to perform tasks not at all concerned with their own peculiar industry.

As noteworthy examples of such unusual circumstances, these two examples serve also to bring into clearer focus certain events concerned with the times during which they occurred. Both incidents took place within a decade. Where one was an extraordinary adventure involving the saving of a fine ship from icy destruction, and preserving her for subsequent world fame, the other was the deliberate destruction of two score of gallant whaleships which had braved dozens of voyages in the far corners of the world. In a word, one was victory, the other failure.

The story surrounding each of these happenings also had completely opposite effects upon the relations between the United States and Great Britain. While the first brought a surge of good will and mutual respect between these two great English-speaking nations, the other caused a veritable storm of protest, violent opposition in the press, and definite diplomatic quarreling.

How these unrelated adventures could cause such different results is only a part of the stories concerned herein. The main factor is that these were extraordinary happenings involving whaleships and each in itself presents a story of singular interest and appeal to all who appreciate the sea and ships.

Edouard A. Stackpole,

Curator, Mystic Seaport

Abandonment of *Resolute* and *Intrepid* May 15, 1854, Showing sails from sledges. From "Voyage of H. M. S. Resolute – George F. McDougall, Master."

Preface

On the second floor of the White House in Washington, in an office reserved for the President when he is broadcasting or having a speech televised to the nation, there is a large desk, of apparant charm and elegance. Affixed to the front of the desk is a bronze plaque, with the following engraved words:

> "H. M. S. *Resolute,* forming part of the expedition sent in search of Sir John Franklin in 1852, was abandoned in Latitude 74° -41′ N Longitude 101° – 22′ W on the 15th of May, 1854. She was discovered and extricated in September 1855 in Latitude 67° N by Captain Buddington of the United States Whaler *George Henry.*"
>
> "The ship was purchased, fitted out and sent to England as a gift to *Her Majesty Queen Victoria* by the *President and People of the United States,* as a token of good will and friendship. This table was made from her timbers when she was broken up and was presented by the *Queen of Great Britain and Ireland* to the *President of the United States* as a memorial of the courtesy and loving kindness which dictated the offer of the gift of the *Resolute.*"

The story behind these facts is a remarkable one. It serves both to remind Americans that old courtesies are worth emulating and that the adventure-packed pages of our maritime history often contain foot-notes which are constantly fascinating and always stimulating.

Map showing drift of *Resolute* from her abandonment to her discovery — and track of her captain and crew after she was abandoned.

From "Voyage of H. M. S. Resolute — G. F. McDougall, Master."

The *George Henry* and the Salvage and Restoration of H. M. S. *Resolute*

Abandonment of the Resolute

The circumstances which led to the misfortunes of the *Resolute* began on a note of tragedy. Seven years before, an Arctic exploring expedition had sailed from England and vanished in the icy vastness of the polar seas. The famous British explorer Sir John Franklin had set out in May, 1845, with the ships *Erebus* and *Terror* to attempt to discover the legendary Northwest Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The expedition was last seen in Baffin Bay, July 22, 1845, and then disappeared.

Several relief expeditions were organized to search for Sir John and his men. One of the most noteworthy of these, both in size and prestige, was under the command of Sir Edward Belcher. His fleet was made up of the ships, *Pioneer, Investigator, North Star, Assistance, Intrepid* (steam tender), and the 600 ton bark *Resolute.* On April 21st, 1852, they sailed from Greenhithe and proceeded down the Thames and to sea.

The *Resolute* had been constructed for Arctic service some five years earlier and originally named *Ptarmigan.* Built of teak with bows sheathed with iron, she had made one voyage to the Arctic in 1850-51, being purchased by the British government upon her return and refitted by the Admiralty. Re-named *Resolute,* and with Capt. Henry Kellett in command, she was assigned to Sir Edward Belcher's expedition.

The small fleet passed through the North Sea and arrived at Stromness in the Orkneys on April 25, anchoring off Kirkwall. Among various activities, Sir Edward from aboard the flagship *Assistance* issued his final orders to Captain Kellett, his second in command, on board the *Resolute.* One paragraph of these orders is of interest. It reads:

> "To carry out the important service in which we are all engaged, we should remember that all must pull together; that the success of the expedition is the success of all . . . One failure, one dark spot on the record, may not at the moment be thought important — but remember that the eyes of the whole civilized world are upon us!"

Captain George F. McDougall, master of the *Resolute,* kept a journal of the voyage up to the abandonment of the vessel in the ice, which gives a complete account of what transpired during the expedition's ill-fated cruises from the time they reached the Davis Straits on May 26th 1852, until the *Resolute* was left on May 15, 1854.

McDougall was a valuable officer. During the long Arctic nights, he helped maintain the morale of the men by producing plays. On one occasion, on November 23, 1853, after the sun had set for the winter, he staged a performance on Melville Island, where they had "dug in", in which he was the scene painter, dress-maker, and make-up man, as well as playing a role. In his *Journal,* on the "Theatre Royal's" activities, he described some of the costumes improvised:

> "A stiff duck petticoat made a capital substitute for a hair ditto; this with the additions of a comforter stuffed with oakum made the after part of the dress resemble a miniature St. Paul's dome . . . Stays of No. 8 canvas are laced with marline . . ."

Sir Edward's expedition spent two winters in the Arctic, in a fruitless search for the Franklin party. Dreading another winter of self-imprisonment, with dwindling supplies, the commander made a sharp decision. On April 28, 1854, he peremptorily ordered the abandonment of those vessels of the fleet which were then caught in the ice.

For two weeks, an exchange of opinions and ideas took place, but finally, on May 15, the *Resolute's* commander, master, officers, and crew, reluctantly left the bark (under protest and with some ceremony) in the ice of Melville Sound south of Cornwallis Island.

McDougall reported in his diary:

> "Without affecting any absurd sentimentality, it may be imagined we all experienced feelings of regret as the time approached, when we were to abandon the staunch old craft to her fate and almost certain destruction . . ."

The signal books were effectually burned at the galley fire, the rudder was unshipped and stowed on deck, and the sails tightly furled on the yards. The pilot jack (letter D) and red ensign and pennant were hoisted at the mast-heads so she would "go down with colors flying." The carpenters caulked down the gunroom skylight and the after companionway. The Captain and his officers dined

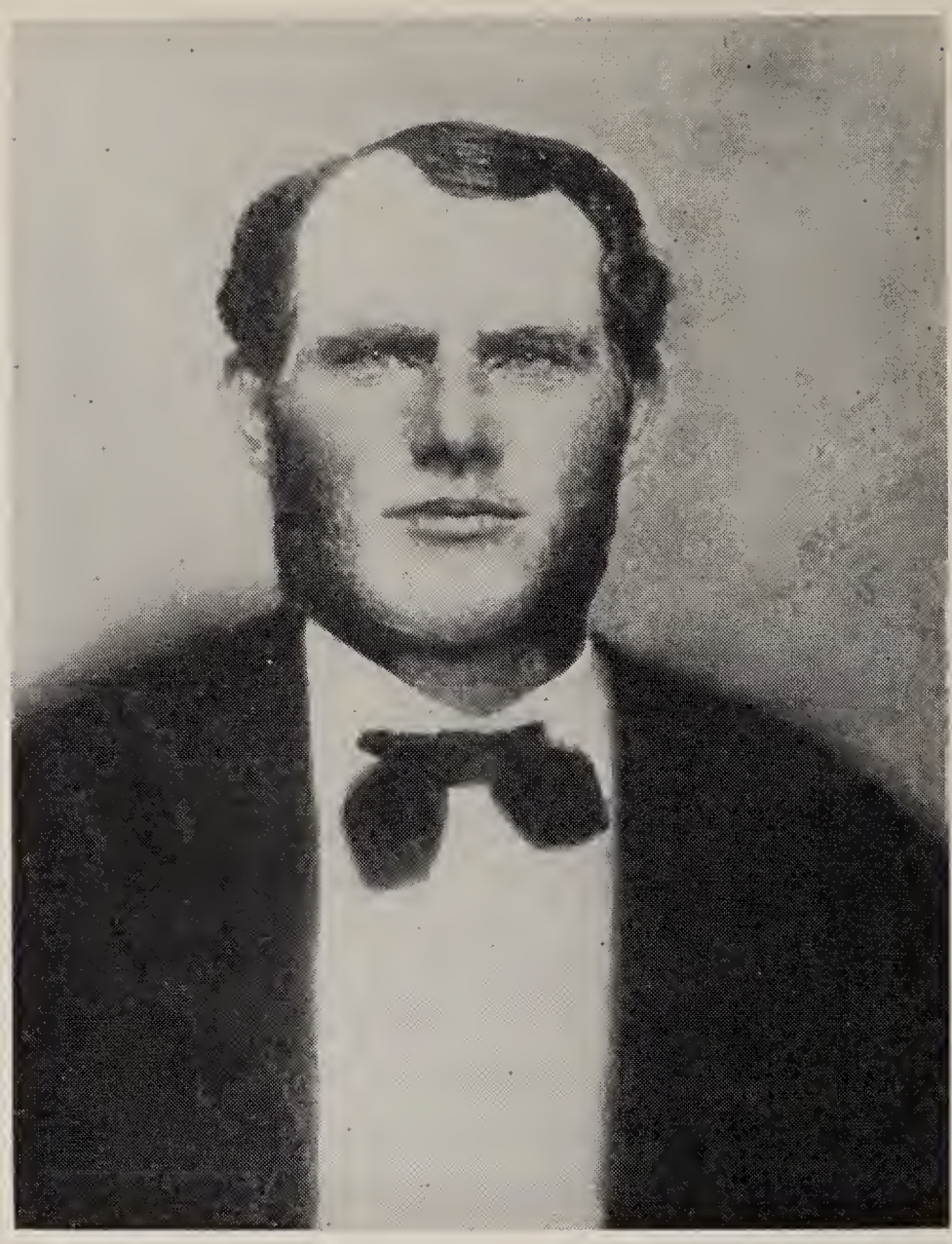
in the darkened gunroom and after drinking a glass of wine to the *Resolute,* the main hatch was secured and at exactly 7 o'clock the party left with their sledges over the ice.

After advancing about a quarter of a mile, "the crews of the sledges halted simultaneously, unharnessed and gave three hearty cheers for the *Resolute* . . . " They used sails when the wind was favorable to supplant their muscular efforts. After an eventful trip over ice, through Barrow Strait, Lancaster Sound, and Baffin Bay they embarked on the British ships *Phoenix* and *Talbot* and *North Star,* sailed across Davis Strait leaving Lievely, Greenland, (Disco Island) on September 9, reaching England the first week in October, 1854.

Sir Edward was bitterly criticized by his countrymen for ordering the abandonment of the vessels under his command and he and his captains were tried by court martial. They were exonerated but, when Sir Edward's sword was returned to him by the President of the Court, it was returned without comment. On the other hand, because he had obeyed peremptory orders, when Capt. Kellet's sword was restored to him after his acquittal, the President "expressed much satisfaction in returning a sword which the owner had worn with so much credit . . . "

The *George Henry* Meets The *Resolute*

It was on the 29th of May, 1855, the whaleship *George Henry* of New London, Conn., sailed from that port under command of Captain James Munroe Buddington, of Groton, to look for whales in Davis Strait. She was manned by her captain and seventeen men, including two mates. On June 14th she quite unexpectedly encountered large fields of ice, through which Capt. Buddington did not care to try to navigate. He followed the edge of the pack to about lat. 67°. His craft was somewhat damaged by floating ice and Capt. Buddington decided to finish the season in that vicinity without proceeding further, since the ice floes seemed to block Davis Strait completely. He had collected some 150 barrels of whale oil when on August 20th off Cape Walsingham, about on the Arctic Circle, the ice opened to a certain extent and the bark was forced through it for about 150 miles.



Captain James Buddington at the time of his salvaging of the *Resolute*.
From Marine Historical Association Collection.

At this time a heavy gale from the north-east sprang up which lasted for three days, and the *George Henry* drifted with the floes in a south-westerly direction. On September 10th, while he was still in ice floes, Capt. Buddington saw a vessel off to the north-east about thirty miles from Cape Mercy on Baffin Island, listing badly. He climbed into the rigging and, looking at her through his glass, decided she was an abandoned vessel. The two vessels gradually approached each other for five days. On the sixth day after sighting the abandoned vessel, and when the ships were about seven miles apart, Capt. Buddington ordered his two mates and two of the crew to proceed to the derelict across the ice pack, and after inspecting her to return to the *George Henry* as soon as possible.

Soon after the departure of the party, a southeaster sprang up and there was consequently no communication between the two vessels for two days. As soon as the wind had subsided and it was safe for the party to retrace its steps, the men left the derelict and after a tedious and hard march, arrived safely back on the *George Henry,* and reported that the vessel was indeed abandoned, and that she was Her Majesty's ship *Resolute.*

Capt. Buddington knew the history of Sir Edward Belcher's expedition and realized that the *Resolute,* abandoned sixteen months before had drifted about 1100 miles. It occurred to him that the safe conveyance of the *Resolute* to some port would be more profitable than killing whales and that it would be much to his credit to salvage a British naval vessel, long since abandoned and considered lost forever to the service of Her Majesty the Queen. He determined at all hazards to try the bold and adventurous task and accordingly sent his first mate, John T. Quayle, with six men back to the *Resolute* with instructions to free the craft of water which had flooded the hold to a depth of about 7 feet.

As it took nearly a day to reach the *Resolute* across the ice, nothing could be expected from the mate's party that day, but the next morning, as the captain had anticipated, a signal was hoisted requesting his presence on board the *Resolute.* Taking two more men with him, and leaving the *George Henry* in charge of the second mate, the captain started to the relief of his comrades. After a hard day's journey on the ice and through pools of half-frozen water, the party reached the *Resolute.*

Capt. Buddington began immediately to ascertain whether the *Resolute* was seaworthy. As has been said, the hold was full of water almost up to the level of the first deck. The ship's four pumps, one of them a "force pump of great power", were then examined and it was found they were of a new type in use in England, Capt. Buddington was, however familiar with the method of operation and the force pump was rigged and placed in working order, and the next morning the men were set to work. For three days the pump was kept continuously busy fourteen hours out of the twenty-four.

On the third day the water was cleared from the *Resolute's* hold and Captain Buddington's attention was turned towards extri-

Chair found in the cabin of *Resolute* now in the Marine Historical Association Collection at Mystic Seaport

cating the prize from her dangerous position in the ice. She still had a bad list to port, caused by a thick deposit of ice on the port side, whereas there was not a sign of ice on the starboard side. This was undoubtedly due to the fact that the *Resolute* had probably drifted for weeks with her head to the east, and thus received the direct rays of the sun, causing a daily warmth on the starboard side only, while on the port side, which was in the shade, ice had collected and become "solidified as if the sun had never shone upon it." It was not until September 23rd that the ice was freed from the port side so she could resume an even keel.

There was a nearly complete lack of fuel on board, although in the course of the search of the vessel a little coal was found in the hold. There were matches and candles on the cabin table and decanters filled with "excellent liquor" and glasses just as they had been left

by Captain Kellett and his officers more than sixteen months before. The top-gallant masts had been destroyed and it is presumed that they had been used for fuel before the *Resolute* was abandoned. Of provisions there were perhaps enough to have supported a crew of 75 men (the normal crew carried) for about nine months. The salt meats were in a fair state of preservation, but everything else had passed into a state of some decay. Several brass cannon and a large quantity of "minnie" rifles were found in perfect order.

Captain Buddington Makes a Decision

The *Resolute,* free of water and on an even keel, presented a more favorable situation and preparations were made to bring her back to the United States. Capt. Buddington decided he would sail the vessel himself. Accordingly, taking ten men and the ship's carpenter from the crew of seventeen which manned the *George Henry,* he left his own craft in charge of his two mates and began in good earnest the endeavor to release the abandoned vessel from her ice-bound situation. The rudder had to be shipped, the rigging hauled taut and the sails put in order before he could venture to start the trip. The job occupied him for some time, but was at last successfully accomplished. He was in a "great dilemma" for proper navigating instruments wherewith to make the voyage to New London after release from the ice. His compass was very uncertain and not at all trustworthy — (he was of course not far from the magnetic pole.) He was without a chronometer and had no chart or map to steer by other than a "rough outline sketch of the whole North American coast drawn on a sheet of foolscap!" With his watch, a quadrant and a miserable compass he bade adieu to his comrades on the *George Henry* and prepared for his homeward voyage.

The *Resolute* continued to drift in a southwesterly direction with the pack ice from the day Captain Buddington sighted her on September 10th. The ice would occasionally open and they could make a little advance, sometimes half a ship's length and sometimes several lengths. On October 16th she succeeded in getting clear of the ice. Capt. Buddington had planned to keep in touch with the *George Henry,* and waited on the outside of the ice floe for three or four days after getting clear, hoping she would appear, but the vessels

Articles found in the cabin of *Resolute,* now in the Marine Historical Association at Mystic Seaport.

missed one another and did not meet again during the trip back to Connecticut. On the 21st of October, 1854, he finally squared away and began his historic voyage toward New London.

While he was waiting for the *George Henry,* however, the British bark *Alibi* hove in sight and on being signalled came alongside the *Resolute.* The news of the salvage was communicated to Captain Stuart of the *Alibi* and a pair of Captain Kellett's epaulettes found on the *Resolute,* was entrusted to him with a request that he have them forwarded to their owner upon his return to England. A letter for the owners of the *George Henry,* informing them of what had occurred was also placed in the hands of Capt. Stuart who promised to mail it immediately upon his arrival in England. That letter, incidentally, reached New London long before the arrival of the *Resolute!*

The *Resolute's* return trip was an eventful one. She was short-handed, poorly rigged and quite unfitted for the long voyage as she had only lower courses available. Fortunately, a few days after the start of the trip, Captain Buddington met the brig *Montgomery* of Boston which supplied her with potatoes and water. The *Resolute's* water was brackish and potable only "when made into chocolate!" The ballast tanks in the hold had burst, and this made the craft very light and cranky. Gale after gale was experienced and she was driven as far south as Bermuda.

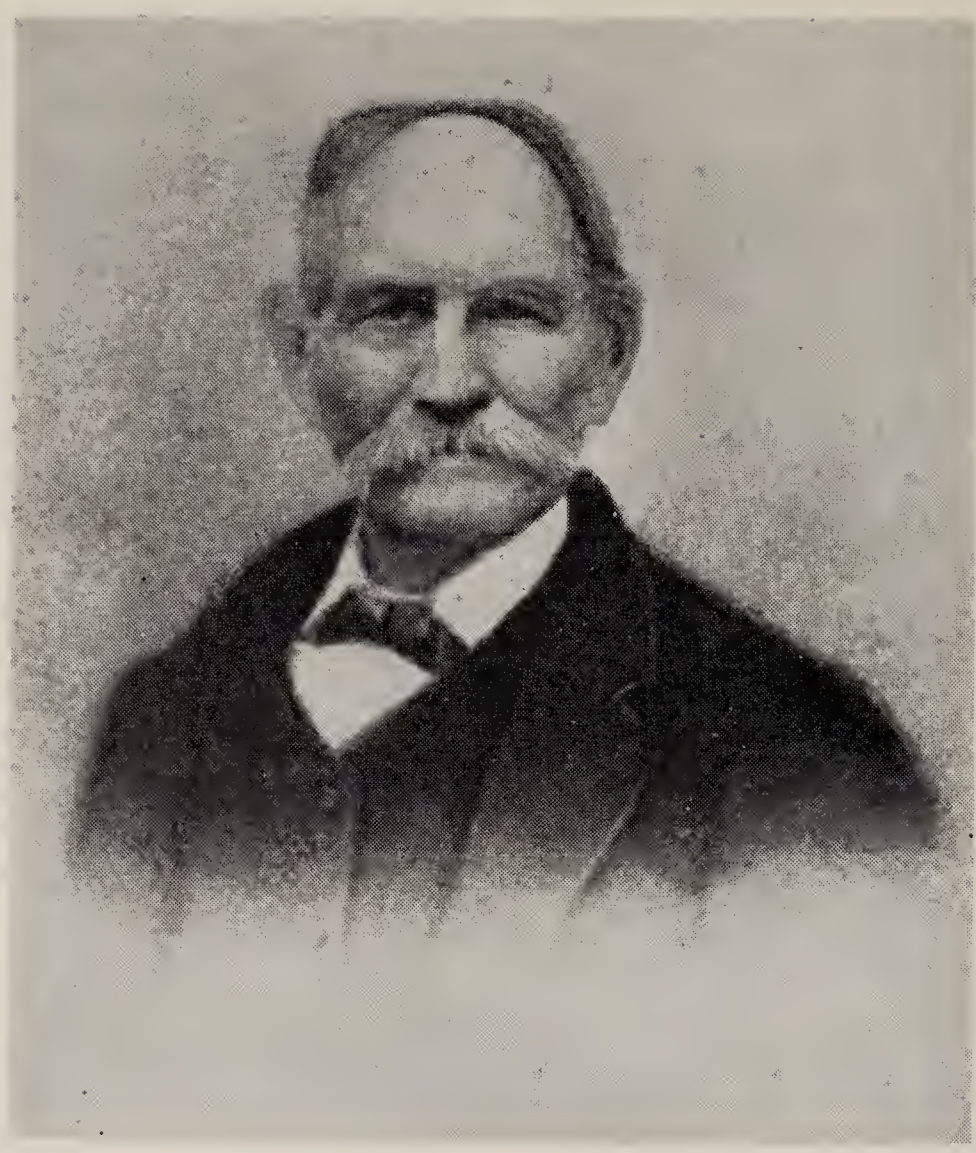
Capt. Buddington's ship's carpenter, Henry Hughes, kept a diary which contained comments on the voyage. He wrote, among other things " . . . this is a dull, dreary place, so much so that it is enough to make me sick of life, for how little one part of the world's inhabitants know what the other has to endure . . . " He described a sleet storm which covered the ship with ice, " . . . the falling of this ice and the thumping of the sleet make music enough for any person who is nervous . . . " And again, on November 30th, he wrote, " . . . we have had a gale of wind ever since we started for home and this is enough to make anyone out of patience. So here we be knocking about on the coast of Labrador and a hard place it is, too . . . " On Thanksgiving Day he wrote "There was a gale of wind and a heavy thunderstorm . . . a dismal Thanksgiving that . . . "

It was a well-nigh incredible voyage of two months, but Capt. Buddington stuck to it.

"Her Majesty's Government . . . Waive Their Right."

The lighthouse at New London was reached Christmas Eve, December 24th, 1855. Here, indeed, was a Christmas present from the Captain to himself and his men. The *Resolute* anchored in New London and was later docked at a pier near the railroad station, where she attracted thousands of sightseers. Special excursion trains were run to New London from other towns for the accommodation of sightseers. She was described by a contemporary commentator as " . . . built in the strongest manner. Her bows are sheathed in iron while her entire frame is copper fastened and bolted . . . She is very bluff in the bows but a pretty good sailor . . . "

Among the articles found in the *Resolute* were such things as anchors, whaling gear, immense quantities of winter clothing and



Captain Buddington in his declining years.
From Marine Historical Association Collection.

other items necessary for a voyage to Arctic Seas, and a good deal of whale bone, perhaps purchased from the esquimaux. Since these types of goods were subject to import duty, a custom house man had to be stationed in the craft to look after the interest of Uncle Sam. Her library contained large volumes on navigation and astronomy and an assortment of histories, dictionaries, romances and books on travel and exploration in both hemispheres.

As soon as the news of the salvage of the *Resolute* reached Washington, Sir John F. Crampton, "British Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary" at Washington, had written to W. L. Marcy, Secretary of State, on Dec. 30, 1855. Sir John enclosed a copy of the *London Gazette* of November 10th, 1854, containing the following notice:

> "The Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty hereby assert a continuing right to Her Majesty the Queen's ships, *Assistance, Resolute, Investigator, Pioneer* and *Intrepid* which have been abandoned in the Arctic Seas by their late crews."

Mr. Marcy promised to publish this notice "for the information of the citizens of the United States." On February 12th, 1856 Sir John Crampton wrote again to Mr. Marcy, having discussed the subject with his Government — (and possibly also with some Admiralty lawyers!) (According to Admiralty Law the entire proceeds of a whaling voyage no matter what turns up, are shared among the parties interested, two-thirds to the owners and one-third to the captain and crew.)

> "I am now instructed by Her Majesty's Government to state that the *Resolute* having been recovered from the Arctic Seas and navigated from Baffin Bay to New London, Connecticut by the skill and exertions of Captain Buddington and the crew of the American Whaler *George Henry,* the Lords of the Admiralty, as the best mark of the sense they entertain of Captain Buddington's conduct, will waive their right to the vessel and leave her to Captain Buddington's entire disposal. If, however, he should prefer giving her up to Her Majesty's Consul at Boston, the Consul will be instructed to sell the vessel and to distribute the proceeds of the sale to Captain Buddington and his crew."

The George Henry Returns

The *George Henry* had arrived in New London December 20th, 1855, a few days before the *Resolute.* She had also had an eventful trip and was leaking badly. She had lost her rudder early on the return trip, and since Capt. Buddington had the ship's carpenter with him on the *Resolute,* the *George Henry* crew was obliged to do without his services in making repairs. They managed, after a day and a half of strenuous work, to rig a jury rudder, but it became unshipped three or four times in the heavy seas, leaving her at the mercy of the waves and delaying her progress towards port. She had put in at Newport before she reached New London. By a curious coincidence the intelligence of the discovery of the remains of Sir John Franklin's party by one of the relief expeditions, and news of the recovery of the *Resolute,* reached Nw York the same day; December 25th, 1855, and were carried to England by the same steamship.

Captain Buddington, in an interview with the press, gave it as his opinion that the *Resolute* could not have been released from the ice any sooner than she was, even if her crew had remained on board,

Resolute in the ice as discovered by Captain Buddington – Showing list to port. From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper,* January 19, 1856.

and that such an experience would thus have been fatal, on account of lack of fuel and provisions. This comment was received with enthusiasm by Sir Edward Belcher's friends.

Mr. Grinnell Makes a Suggestion

Henry Grinnell was a wealthy philanthropist who had been interested in Arctic explorations and who had himself financed one of the expeditions to search for Sir John Franklin. He was very much concerned with the salvage of the *Resolute.* On January 7th, 1856 he wrote to the Secretary of State on the subject.

> " . . . I consider [this] of great importance, and that is to make every effort to cultivate and extenuate a kind feeling between this country and Great Britain and further I must say an act of comity and justice towards a brother nation . . . The ship *Resolute,* a National vessel, fitted out by the Government of Great Britain for the humane and merciful object of assisting the crews of two ships . . . for the rescue of Franklin and his party whom you well know was making explorations in the Arctic Regions, has been fallen in with by an American Whaler, abandoned, and safely brought into the port of New London. And now allow me to make a suggestion that the Government of

this country take possession of that ship, convey her to the Navy Yard at Brooklyn, put her in good condition and send her properly officered and manned from our Navy to the Government she belongs to and deliver her up without any compensation. Of course compensation would have to be given to those interested in the Whaler, from what I can learn this compensation would probably be from $30,000 to $50,000. You must bear in mind from these explorations made by the British we have derived so much benefit, and perhaps greater than they. The value of oil and bone taken in the Arctic Seas explored by them would amount to 30 or 50 millions of dollars. I make this suggestion and hope it may receive your favorable consideration."

The Secretary of State replied to Mr. Grinnell on January 26th that " . . . such a measure could not be carried into effect without authority from Congress: your suggestion has, however, been taken into consideration with a view toward inviting the attention of the proper committees of that body on the subject."

Elisha K. Kane, a United States Naval officer who had headed one of the Arctic explorations financed by Mr. Grinnell, added his strong recommendation for the return of the *Resolute* to England and considerable correspondence took place, but the State Department was apparently not interested, and Mr. Grinnell was advised on February 20th, 1856 that " . . . any application to Congress for her redemption with a view to restoring her to the British Government would be inexpedient."

Congress Takes A Hand

The salvage of the *Resolute* did, however, receive the attention of Congress on June 10th, 1856 when Connecticut's senator, Lafayette S. Foster, modestly introduced a resolution to instruct the Committee on Commerce "to look in to the expediency of authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to issue a register for the British built bark *Resolute* found derelict near Cumberland Inlet in the Arctic Ocean by the officers and crew of the American Whaling Ship *George Henry* of New London, where she is now lying, all claim to said vessel by the British Government having been relinquished to the salvors."

Resolute entering New London Harbor without topmasts – December 24, 1855.
From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, January 19, 1856.

Senator Foster diffidently explained

> " . . . I wish to say this is a resolution of mere enquiry, . . . that the Committee on Commerce might enquire into the expediency of issuing a register for the bark so she might be registered as an American vessel." He then said for the record " . . . I may be permitted to add, Mr. President, that I feel some little pride in the fact that a ship abandoned by the officers and crew attached to her, belonging to the Royal Navy of England has been discovered and brought safely into port by American Sailors and by Connecticut Sailors. I feel some national pride and some state pride, both, I hope, laudable under the circumstances . . . "

Senator James M. Mason of Virginia, Chairman of the Committee in Foreign Relations, who afterward played one of the title roles in the famous Mason and Slidell case on HMS *Trent* during the Civil War, then rose in the Senate Chamber and said:

> "Mr. President, I saw, as did the whole American people . . . the fact announced of the recovery of this vessel . . . It occurred to me at the time and I have been more strongly impressed with it in thinking over the subject since, that the proper disposition of that vessel would be for the Government of the United States to purchase her and refit her in a proper manner

and send her back to England. She was the property of the British Government, and one of their ships . . . I had thought that the high national courtesy which I am grateful to say marks our country certainly with as much distinction as any in the great family of nations, that national courtesy which does more to preserve the peace of the world even than armed ships themselves, would suggest that on a suitable occasion this ship should become the property of the Government if it can be done in fair and agreeable terms, and should be sent back to England in the name of the American people. I would suggest therefore to the Honorable Senator from Connecticut that unless there be some immediate occasion for this resolution, it would be well perhaps to let it lie over until we can confer on the subject . . . "

Senator Foster replied that he had thought of the idea, but had been hesitant to introduce it for fear it would "not be likely to receive the sanction of a majority of this body." He assured the honorable Senator from Virginia that, the "persons concerned in this vessel . . . will one and all join heartily and cordially in disposing of it at a very low price to the government in order that this proposal may be carried out."

Thus, on June 24th, 1856, Senator Mason formally introduced *Senate Bill Number* 22 as a joint resolution:

"Authorizing the purchase and restoration to the British Government of the ship *Resolute* late of the British Navy . . . In token of the deep interest felt in the United States for the service in which this ship was engaged and of the sense entertained by Congress of the act of Her Majesty's Government in surrendering it to the salvors . . . The President of the United States is requested . . . to cause the ship . . . to be fully repaired . . . and then sent back to England under the direction of the Secretary of the Navy . . . "

A letter was introduced into the record from Messrs. Perkins and Smith of New London, the owners of the *George Henry,* to the effect that their only expectation would be to receive for the *Resolute* "a sum approaching her cost to us," and quoting $40,000. Junior Senator Isaac Toucey of Connecticut, in supporting Senator Mason's resolution, expressed the thought that the "noble act of daring and perseverance characteristic of our seamen is perhaps unparalleled." The resolution was passed unanimously by the Senate June 24th, 1856 and finally approved by the House on August 28th.

The *Resolute* – *Illustrated London News*, December 20, 1856.

United States and British Relations Are Re-Examined

The *Resolute's* drama occurred at a time when diplomatic relations between the United States and England were seriously strained. The so-called Clayton-Bulwer Treaty had been negotiated in 1850 in connection with British control of the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua and a possible interocean canal in Central America, the importance of which had been emphasized by the discovery of gold in California. The Treaty, termed as "probably the most persistently unpopular agreement ever made by the United States with a foreign government," was vague in some of its provisions and the two countries were at odds over their respective rights and privileges under it.

Secretary of State Daniel Webster had said " . . . There will be no security for the continuance of peace [in Central America]

until the British retire from Graytown [in Nicaragua] . . . I am quite at a loss to know what importance there is to justify all the hazards of collision which her continued possession of it will certainly entail upon her and us . . . no part of our relations with England is so critical and ominous of evil . . . "

And in 1853, the United States Minister in London, James Buchanan, reported " . . . We might expect a speedy settlement [in Central America] if any statesman except Lord Palmerston were at the head of the government . . . " Lord Palmerston said " . . . These Yankees are most disagreeable fellows to have to deal with . . . They are totally unscrupulous and dishonest and determined somehow or other to carry their point. The [Clayton-Bulwer] Treaty opposes a barrier to the Yankees and therefore they detest [it] . . . They are such ingenious rogues . . . "

Another very serious break concerned the Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to the United States from England, Sir John F. Crampton, referred to above. He nearly caused open rupture between Great Britain and the United States by recruiting soldiers within the territory of the United States for the Crimean War, an entirely extra-legal activity. The First Lord of the Admiralty said ". . . We are fast drifting into a war with the United States . . . " and President Pierce after dismissing Sir John, addressed a letter to Congress May 29th, 1856 " . . . I have ceased to hold intercourse with the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland."

Captain Buddington's Christmas Present is Worth $40,000

After the joint Resolution to present the *Resolute* to Queen Victoria, had passed Congress, Mr. Grinnell was asked by the Secretary of State to negotiate the purchase of the *Resolute*. He wrote on September 9th, 1856 that he had "visited New London and examined the materials on board of her as far as was practicable. I would say that forty thousand (40,000) dollars would not be extravagant for her including all belonging to her. I am of the opinion that if sent to England where the bark is well-known that with the material on board of her a greater sum than this would be realized to her owners . . . The bark is about six hundred (600) tons burthen, built of

H. M. S. *Resolute* entering Portsmouth Harbor, England, December 24, 1856.
From "Voyages of H. M. S. Resolute – G. F. McDougall, Master."

teak wood, about 7 years old, and cost the British Government by an official report about one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars.

On September 11th, two days later, he wrote " . . . I have consummated the purchase of the *Resolute* with Messrs. Perkins and Smith (the owners of the *George Henry*) for the sum of $40,000 delivered at the Navy Yard, Brooklyn. A powerful steam tug leaves today to tow her to the yard . . . "

"If We Return the Resolute to England Will They Receive It?"

The international situation was so delicate that Mr. Marcy, the Secretary of State, was concerned about just how the return of the *Resolute* would be received in England, and on September 1st, 1856 he wrote to Mr. G. M. Dallas, the American Ambassador:

> " . . . You will receive enclosed with this letter a copy of a joint Resolution by Congress relating to the *Resolute*. The course of this Government in that affair is only what liberal comity seemed to dictate and it is not desirable that it should be looked at in any other light in England. It may be supposed that this Government has strained a point in this matter in order to assuage a justly excited irritation in regard to past transactions and that

a consciousness of wrongs on our part has led to this act. This would be a very erronious conclusion and it is intended by the President to manage the affair in such a way as to divest it of any such aspect.

"It is not expected that you will not give any notification on the subject to Her Majesty's Government or take any step in respect to it. When the *Resolute* is properly repaired and furnished it will be sent out and you will then be instructed to inform that government of the proceedings in the case."

Mr. Dallas replied on September 15th:

". . . To the subject of joint Congressional Resolution brought to my attention by your letter of September first, I shall of course abstain from any reference until further instructed. Let me remark, however, that in the public sentiment and official mind of this country the whole of the cooperative search for Sir John Franklin from the first movement at Washington to the last is considered as altogether apart from our political relations: and I should be much surprised to hear in public or in private the slightest attempt to improve on or deprecate our motives of action. A suggestion of the kind would, I feel assured, be hardly acceptable to the merest anti-American wranglers, while it would arouse the indignation of all the scientific, philanthropic, and honorable everywhere. As it appears to me, the world will regard the joint Resolution as a proceeding which our people esteemed to be due to themselves alone; an act which insures a very remarkable series of efforts in the cause of enlightened humanity from the remotest taint of selfishness. Had we kept the *Resolute* she would have been a standing reproach that we had profited by the misfortunes of those whom we had volunteered to aid . . . "

The Resolute Starts Another Voyage.

The *Resolute* left New London September 12th under tow of the steam tug *Achilles* for the Brooklyn Navy Yard where she was refitted with a great deal of attention to detail. Everything aboard that could be reconditioned was preserved, such as the books in the captain's library, pictures in his cabin and musical instruments belonging to the officers. New British flags were made up in the Navy Yard to take the place of those which had rotted. She was repainted from stem to stern and much of her rigging was replaced. After refitting, she sailed on November 13th, 1856 from Brooklyn under com-

Her Majesty's visit to *Resolute* – Cowes.
From *Illustrated London News*, December 27, 1856.

mand of Henry J. Hartstene, a Naval officer, native of South Carolina, who had seen service in the polar seas, having been sent in 1855 in command of an expedition to relieve Captain Kane and the "second general expedition to Arctic Regions."

After a 27 day voyage, the *Resolute* reached Spithead in England on Friday, December 12th. The weather was so thick that day, and the wind was so high that it was almost impossible to communicate with Spithead, but at 5 o'clock the next day, Saturday, the steamboat *Sprightly* was sent out with " . . . a goodly supply of the finest beef, vegetables and other articles from the Royal Navy stores," from Clarence Yard. The weather was still very rugged, the wind blowing a gale, the rain falling in torrents and lightning flashing in a "most extraordinary manner considering the time of year." The *Sprightly*, nevertheless, held on, and delivered her stores.

Commander Hartstene boarded the *Sprightly* and landed near the official residence of the United States Vice Consul, Chevalier Vincent Pappalardo, where he was met by Sir Thomas Maitland, Com-

mander of the port. After meeting other port officers and after an "elegant dejeuner at the Consulate," Capt. Hartstene left for London by the 11:15 p.m. train to deliver his dispatches to the British Admiralty and American Minister. The Government sent down a special messenger on Sunday to order suites of apartments and every accommodation of the best class for the American officers, at the Portland Hotel, Southsea.

Queen Victoria Boards the Resolute.

The *Resolute* was moved to Cowes on Wednesday for the convenience of Her Majesty, who with Prince Albert, the Prince of Wales, the Princess Royal and Princess Alice, drove to the pier in an open carriage drawn by four gray ponies, and was received on board by Captain Hartstene and his officers. The *Resolute,* dressed in her colors, had been made fast alongside the Royal Embarkation place at Trinity Wharf. The English and American flags were flying and as soon as the Queen set foot on the deck, the Royal Standard was hoisted at the main. The *Resolute* fired a salute and the ship's company received Her Majesty with three rounds of cheers. All the officers were presented to the Queen by Captain Hartstene who then addressed Her Majesty in a gracious presentation speech:

> "Allow me to welcome Your Majesty on board the *Resolute,* and, in obedience to the will of my countrymen and of the President of the United States, to restore her to you, not only as an evidence of a friendly feeling to your sovereignty, but as a token of love, admiration and respect to Your Majesty personally."

The Queen smiled graciously and replied, "I thank you, sir."

The Royal party was then taken on a tour of inspection of the vessel, where as a contemporary observer said, "everything was as nearly as possible just as it was when it was abandoned by Capt. Kellett. Muskets, swords, telescopes, nautical instruments had all been cleaned and Pim's music box occupied its old place on top of a whatnot and logs of the various officers were in their proper places on the book shelves. On the wall was a picture of a ballet girl pirouetting on the tips of her toes" [a pinup girl of the period!]

Among the stores found aboard the *Resolute* had been several puncheons of rum which had been placed aboard when she left

Reception of Her Majesty by Captain Hartstein and his officers on the *Resolute*. *Illustrated London News*, December 27, 1856.

Wollwich. One of these had been sent by Captain Hartstene to Prince Albert. The Queen then invited Capt. Hartstene to dine and spend the night at Osborne House and gave directions that £100 be distributed among the men. The Americans had baked a cake of "classical proportions" ornamented by flags and "installed on a large silver service in the State Cabin to honor Queen Victoria as a woman and mother as well as a sovereign." Unfortunately the Queen declined to cut it, much to the disappointment of Capt. Hartstene's men. The Illustrated London News commented very enthusiastically, and on Dec. 13, 1856 said " . . . will not the City people who are always in such hot haste to pour out the turtle at the feet of anybody who attains eminence — or notority — do something in the way of hospitality? . . . "

The Shipowners Association Pays Tribute

Shortly after the Royal visit a deputation from the Shipowners Association of Liverpool arrived in Portsmouth and was received on board the *Resolute*. A long, picturesque speech was made by the

chairman, Mr. S. R. Graves, who said, in part:

> ". . . This ship after human skill had failed to extricate her from the apparent destruction which awaited her has been miraculously preserved that she might be the means of affording the people of America a further opportunity for evincing their strong sympathy and drawing into closer union the friendly relations of both countries. If, in after years, slight differences of opinion should arise between our respective governments, we have but to remember the *Resolute* and her priceless cargo of good-will sent freely and freely received, to feel assured that threatening clouds must in turn be dispelled and pass away . . . "

Capt. Hartstene replied in a graceful little speech; he said in part " . . . The advancement of science and the arts, to which both nations have, in a spirit of generous rivalry, so greatly contributed, has changed our ancient geographical positions. Miles and seconds have become almost synonymous words and now the iron messengers of commerce fly like steam shuttles, weaving between us a fabric of mutual interest . . . " This sounds very modern!

On December 30th the formal handing over of the *Resolute* took place. A little before one o'clock, Captain George Seymour of H. M. S. *Victory* and his officers and party of seamen and a Corporal's Guard of Royal Marines boarded the *Resolute*. At this time the American colors, side by side with the British, flew from the peak. As the dock yard clock struck one, the flagship *Victory* hoisted the stars and stripes to her main, which she saluted with 21 guns. While the salute was being fired, Captain Hartstene ordered the American colors hauled down on the *Resolute*, which then became a British ship. Captain Hartstene, in a felicitous little speech said, " . . . I now, with a pride totally at variance with our professional ideas, strike my flag, and to you, Sir, give up the ship," to which Captain Seymour replied " . . . The graceful act on the part of the United States towards this country and the courteous manner in which it has been carried out by Capt. Hartstene . . . will ever live in the memory of the people of England." Capt. Hartstene's inference to "giving up the ship" referred to the order credited (perhaps incorrectly) to Capt. James Lawrence of the U. S. frigate *Chesapeake* in 1813, during his disastrous engagement with the *Shannon*.

Her Majesty the Queen inspecting the charts in the cabin of the *Resolute*.
Illustrated London News, December 27, 1856.

The American Ambassador Reports

The official report of the American Ambassador was exceedingly enthusiastic. He said:

> " . . . late in the morning of Saturday the thirteenth your note was delivered to me by Commander Hartstene who had that morning arrived with the bark, *Resolute,* at Portsmouth. I addressed the Earl of Clarendon [Secretary for Foreign Affairs] at once, in conformity with your instructions, tendering the ship to the British Government with a request that the United States might be allowed to restore her to Her Majesty's service. In a private note I also sought an interview with His Lordship in order to arrange whatever formalities the proceedings might require. He was out of town but on Monday I received a note from him saying he would return to London and would be happy to see me at three o'clock on Tuesday the 16th. Our conference was an entirely agreeable one; His Lordship characterizing the restoration of the *Resolute* as an act of national courtesy wholly unprecedented and one which could not fail but to have the most beneficial influence upon the relations of the two countries.

"As I decided to put Captain Hartstene in communication with the Admiralty I made inquiries about Sir Charles Wood [First Lord] and was informed that he was probably at his country residence but should be immediately apprised of my wishes and would no doubt come to the city without delay. At about nine o'clock that night (Tuesday) I received the reply of Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to my offering letter of the thirteenth. Copies of these communications accompany this dispatch . . . "

"Yesterday morning, the eighteenth, I accompanied Captain Hartstene to the Admiralty and he presented to Sir Charles Wood the letter of the Secretary of the Navy, which Sir Charles immediately read and then entered upon the business of our visit. After some interchange of ideas respective to the best and simplest mode of transferring the *Resolute* to the Royal Navy, it was understood that Sir Charles should write to Admiral Sir George Seymour instructing that officer to confer with Captain Hartstene upon the subject and to fix with him the details of time and forms. Sir Charles enquired whether the Captain did not propose a short stay in England and being told that a return to the United States as soon as possible was in view, he said that one of Her Majesty's steamers would be at their service for the voyage home and pressed the offer with great earnestness upon us as the only just and appropriate conclusion which could be given to the whole proceeding — so remarkable and so deeply interesting to the two nations. The proposal was unexpected and we forbore an immediate reply to it. He then said he would write upon the matter to me and also to Captain Hartstene and hoped we will unite upon reflection in accepting the offer he had made. Within an hour subsequent to the interview I received from Sir Charles a letter and sent him an answer . . . The acceptance of the *Resolute* has been recognized by so many complimentary displays of grateful feelings from all classes, the very highest and the noblest, that I could not, without incurring the hazard of acting most ungraciously, refuse the proposition of Sir Charles. To that conclusion Captain Hartstene and myself came after carefully considering the subject and I hope it may receive the approbation of the President. It is probable that in less than a week's time the British steamship will be on her way to New York . . . "

The visit of King Edward (then Prince of Wales) and his parents to the *Resolute*.

From "Our King and Queen – the Story of Their Lives," William Henry Wilkins.

It seemed so desirable to accept the hospitable suggestion of the British that on December 18th Mr. Dallas wrote to Sir Charles Wood.

> " . . . I so sincerely reciprocate your wish for "promoting and cementing the good feeling between the two countries" that I have great pleasure in expressing by our acquiescence in the generous manner which you propose to return Captain Hartstene and his associates to their own country."

However, sad to say, more mature consideration indicated that there might be some complication in Sir Charles' plan and the American Ambassador wrote to the State Department in Washington on December 31st.

> " . . . No abatement in the enthusiasm of welcome took place during the whole stay of Captain Hartstene in this country. He remained here from the 13th to the 30th of December and was the object of general and unremitting courtesy. His conduct was in every respect that which became a Naval officer of the United States and has left a most favorable impression. He had, as I informed you, yielded to the urgent request of Sir Charles Wood, First Lord of the Admiralty and consented that the return home be on board one of Her Majesty's steam ships but on more mature reflection, considerations of practical weight against the plan suggested themselves and after advisement with Lords Palmerston [Prime Minister] and Clarendon it was abandoned. Captain Hartstene and crew embarked on the *Washington* at Southampton yesterday but it is not likely that they will reach the United States as soon as this dispatch."

Captain Hartstene and his crew sailing on the U. S. mail steamer *Washington*, disappointed many people in England who had planned further hospitality for them and the officers and crew of H. M. steam-frigate *Retribution* who had expected to carry them back to New York were especially disappointed.

A very articulate contemporary English poet, Martin F. Tupper of Albany, commemorated the *Resolute* incident in an "*International Ballad*" which was reprinted many times both in the United States and England, and which he called:

"The Affair of the Resolute"

I

A gracious and generous action
Outweighing all sins on each side
Outshaming the treasons of faction,
Ambition, and folly, and pride.
No jealousies now shall be rankling
No silly suspicions intrude
But 'round the rememb'rance of Franklin
Our brotherly loves be renewed.

II

The *Resolute* lying forsaken
The sport of the winds and the ice
By luck to America taken
Is nobly restored without price.
Not only refusing all ransom
But, fitted anew for the Queen
In a manner more generous and handsome,
And kinder, than ever was seen.

III

We, too, were not lacking in honor
For, waiving all claim to the ship
When Buddington's flag was upon her
We flung away quibble and quip.
"He saved her, and so let him take her,"
But handsome America said,
"I guess, Cousin, that we can make her
A prettier present instead."

IV

"With thousands of dollars we'll buy her
With thousands of dollars repair
(Diplomacy cannot take fire
That here at least all isn't fair)
In honor of Britain's ice-heroes
Of Franklin* and Ross* and McClure*
To gentle Victoria, the Sea-Rose
Her *Resolute* thus we restore!"

V

Huzzah for this generous meeting
Huzzah, too, for Grinnell and Kane
And all the kind hearts that are beating
So nobly, from Kansas to Maine.
Our instincts are all for each other
(Though both have a tincture of heat)
And truly as brother with brother
Our bosoms in unison meet.

VI

When crafty diplomacy's blindness
So often does harm in the dark
One plain, international kindness
Comes, just as the dove, to the Ark.
O, wisdom, above the astuteness
Of placemen, by cunning defiled
O, better than manhood's acuteness
This kindliness, as of a child.

*Sir James Clark Ross commanded the *Enterprise* in the search for Franklin; he also discovered the magnetic pole. Sir Robert J. LeM. McClure commanded the relief ship *Investigator*.

H. J. Hartstein, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper,* December 15, 1855.

The Voyage Ends for the George Henry and the Resolute.

The *George Henry* took part in other Arctic whaling expeditions and on July 16th, 1863, was lost on one of the lower Savage Islands in Hudson's Strait, having been forced on the rocks by strong tides in calm weather, heavily beset by large floes of ice, which for lack of wind rendered the vessel quite unmanageable. She was a total wreck and after saving quantities of stores, her skipper, at that time Christopher B. Chapell, and his crew were rescued and returned to New London.

The *Resloute* was retired from active service and laid up on the River Medway not long after the drama in which she had participated. Steam was rapidly making sailing vessels obsolete, especially for polar sea navigation. She was finally broken up in 1880 and on August 26th, Victor Drummond, British Ambassador at Washington, wrote to William M. Evarts, Secretary of State:

> "In accordance with the instructions of Earl Grenville [Foreign Secretary] I have the honor of informing you that the Queen, Her August Sovereign, has signified her gracious pleasure that on the occasion of the breaking up of the Arctic Discovery Ship *Resolute* at Chatham Dock Yard a piece of furniture constructed from a portion of the timbers of that vessel should be presented to the President of the United States in grateful acknowledgment of the restoration of the vessel in 1856 as a free gift by the President and People of the United States. A writing table has therefore been made for this purpose with an appropriate inscription . . . "

The "writing table" was shipped on the steamship *Australia* November 15th, 1880 to New York and sent to Washington "express collect" and presented to President Hayes with appropriate ceremony. Thus ended the drama of the abandonment, salvage and restoration of Her Majesty's ship *Resolute,* a drama which although of minor importance historically quite possibly had a picturesque share in cementing friendly relations between the United States and Great Britain at a time when they were definitely strained to a breaking point.

The New Bedford Captains of the Stone Fleet. Old Dartmouth Historical Society and Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Mass.

The Sinking of Two *"STONE FLEETS"* at Charleston, S. C. during the Civil War

The Stone Fleet, sea route. Harper's Weekly, December 14, 1861.

The Plan For The "Stone Fleets."

One of the problems confronting the United States Navy after the outbreak of the Civil War was the effective blockading of Confederate ports. This was necessary to prevent export of cotton and import of rifles, medicines and war material in general and also stop egress of Confederate privateers, which were embarrassingly effective. Among the principal ports in the South were Savannah, Ga. and Charleston, S. C. A Federal naval base was established in 1861 by the occupation of Port Royal at the confluence of the Broad and Beaufort Rivers in South Carolina between Savannah and Charles-fleet. The fleet was far from adequate for an effective blockade and in spite of its efforts, blockade-running continued to be successful.

It occurred to Gustavus V. Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, that it might be possible to sink vessels in the harbor channels at Savannah and Charleston, and thus effectively close them. On October 17th, 1861 Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, having received support for Mr. Fox's idea from A. D. Bache, Superintendent of Coast Survey, issued orders to Guy D. Morgan, purchasing agent in New York, who was assisted by Mr. Richard H. Chapell of New London and New Haven, and I. Bartlett of New Bedford. The official order stated:

> This department is desirous of obtaining twenty-five old vessels of not less than 250 tons each for the purpose of sinking on the bar at Savannah. You are authorized to obtain suitable vessels in conjunction with Mr. Richard Chapell of New London in the manner following:—
>
> 1—Purchase the twenty-five vessels after suitable examination as secretly as possible before any knowledge is obtained that the government is in the market.
>
> 2—Land all unnecessary articles and sell them at your leisure to the best advantage.
>
> 3—Prepare the vessels for delivery off Savannah and contract with the proper parties for such delivery to the naval officer in command at that port.
>
> 4—Have a pipe and valve fitted under skillful direction so that after anchoring in position the water can be readily let into the hold.

Craft sunk by the Confederates in the Savannah River.
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, December 28, 1861.

5—Load with blocks of granite to utmost content considering their safe transit down the coast.

6—Leave one anchor and chain on board for use and such sails and gear as are necessary to sail them to their destination.

7—The officers and seamen employed in this duty will be brought home by and at the expense of this department.

8—Let their duty be performed with the utmost dispatch and let the vessels sail in fleets of six at a time.

9—Notify this department of the probable time of each departure.

The number of vessels to be purchased was subsequently increased by a "Second fleet," making a total of about 45 vessels. They were for the most part old whalers from New Bedford, Mass. and New London, Conn. The whaling industry had seen its best days, the peak having been reached in the 1850s; so it was not very difficult to obtain old craft many of which were no longer serviceable. One of the craft, for instance, had originally been a British armed store ship which, having come to these shores with supplies for the British during the Revolution, was captured in Long Island Sound by some American fisherman and converted into an American whaler.

On November 18th, 1861 Mr. Morgan wrote to Captain S. F. Du-Pont, fleet captain in charge of the blockade . . .

> "Under the direction of the Secretary of the Navy I hand you herewith a list of twenty-one vessels loaded with stone and prepared to sink, also a copy of the letter handed to each master for his agreement. If the weather is good all the vessels will sail on the 20th instant."

The craft of this group averaged about 300 tons and cost about ten dollars per ton. They were, as has been said, nearly all of them vessels which were nearing the end of their useful careers.

The Old Whaleships Are Gathered Together.

The "First fleet" included the following vessels:—

Rig	*Name*	*Port*	*Rig*	*Name*	*Port*
Bark	Amazon	Fairhaven	Bark	Leonidas	New Bedford
Bark	American	Edgartown	Ship	Lewis*	New London
Ship	Archer*	New Bedford	Ship	Maria Theresa	New Bedford
Ship	Corea	New London	Ship	Meteor*	Mystic
Bark	Cossack	New Bedford	Bark	Peter Demell	New York
Ship	Courier	New Bedford	Ship	Phoenix*	New London
Bark	Fortune	New London	Ship	Potomac	Nantucket
Bark	Frances Henrietta	Fairhaven	Ship	Rebecca Simms	New Bedford
Bark	Garland**	Fairhaven	Ship	Robin Hood	Mystic
Bark	Harvest***	Fairhaven	Bark	South America	New Bedford
Ship	Herald	New Bedford	Bark	Tenedos	New London
Ship	Kensington	New Bedford	Ship	Timor	Sag Harbor
Ship	L. C. Richmond	New Bedford			

* These vessels in trouble on arrival off Tybee Island, Savannah.

** Kept for a coal ship at Port Royal, S. C.

*** Kept as a storeship at Port Royal.

Mr. Morgan reported that the purchase of the second fleet was somewhat more of a problem than the first fleet had been, for he had "cleared the ports" in obtaining the first fleet. He was obliged to go as far as Maine to fill the quota and paid up to $5,000 for some of the vessels.

The New Bedford Stone Fleet, November 16, 1861. Old Dartmouth Historical Society and Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Mass.

The second fleet included the following vessels:—

Rig	*Name*	*Port*	*Rig*	*Name*	*Port*
Ship	America	New Bedford	Ship	Mechanic	Newport, R.I.
Ship	Bogota	New York	Bark	Messenger	Salem, Mass.
Bark	Dove	New London	Ship	Montezuma	New London
Bark	Edward	New Bedford	Ship	Newburyport	Gloucester, Mass.
Ship	Emerald	Sag Harbor, N.Y.	Ship	New England	New London
Ship	India	New Bedford	Bark	Noble	Sag Harbor, N.Y.
Bark	Jubilee	Portland, Me.	Bark	Peri	Portland, Me.
Bark	Majestic	New Bedford	Brig	Stephen Young	Boston
Bark	Marcia	Portland, Me.	Ship	Valparaiso	New Bedford
Bark	Margaret Scott*	New Bedford	Ship	William Lee	Newport, R.I.

* Old slave ship kept as coal ship at Port Royal.

The shipping articles issued to the skippers of the individual whale ships were printed in standard form and read as follows: . . .

> From the port of New London (New Bedford) under orders for a port in the United States not south of Key West, there to leave the vessels and be returned to this port. Time of service not to exceed three months. Wages guaranteed for one month and payable on return to New London (New Bedford).
>
> The [name of ship] now under your command having been purchased by the Navy Department for service on the southern coast of the United States, the following are your orders for your proposed voyage.
>
> You will proceed from this port on . . . the . . . instant, or with the first fair wind, and when clear of the land make a direct passage to the port of . . . and then deliver your ship to the commanding officer of the blockading fleet off said port, taking his receipt for her to return to me. After the delivery of your vessel, yourself and crew will be provided with passage to the port of New York by the Navy Department and on arriving there you will call on . . . who will furnish you with funds to return to this port.
>
> On the voyage down it would be well as far as practicable to keep in company of your consorts, to exhibit lights by night and sound horns or fog bells in case of fog near the coast.
>
> You will examine daily the pipe in the quarter of your ship under water to see that it remains safe.
>
> The only service required of you is the safe delivery of your vessel, and as she is old and heavily laden, you will use special care that she sustains no damage from unskillful seamanship or want of prudence and care.

Map of Charleston Harbor showing position of first Stone Fleet sunk then. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper,* January 11, 1862.

On a close approach to your port of destination, begin to put between decks cargo into lower hold and before anchoring permanently have your second anchor and chain (if you have one) secured to the deck. On leaving your vessel unless otherwise ordered, you will bring away papers, chronometers, charts, compasses, spy glasses and any other valuable portable articles not required by the commander of the blockading fleet there, and return them safely to me.

In case of disaster to preclude going on, you can call at Fortress Monroe, Hampton Roads, to repair damages, reporting to the flag officer there.

Wishing you a safe and speedy passage, I am yours respectfully,

G. D. Morgan.

Below the water line of each vessel a hole was bored into which was fitted a piece of lead pipe five inches in diameter with a plug arrangement so attached that water could be let in with a velocity calculated to sink any of the vessels in the space of fifteen or twenty minutes. In case the valves should not work as expected each vessel was equipped with two large augers so there would be no doubt whatever on the score of sinking.

The crews consisted of nine men assigned to each bark and ten to each ship, in addition to the captain, two mates and a cook. It was contemplated that the "vessels would be anchored broadside in the channels and then sunk and that the crews should not leave their vessels until the work had been securely performed."

The gathering of hundreds of tons of field stones from the stone walls in the neighborhood of New Bedford and New London must have been an impressive sight as it meant employing many dozens of ox carts, supplied by the local farmers to haul the stones to the docks for loading.

Departure and Arrival of the Fleets

The first fleet of twenty-five whalers left New Bedford as a unit and not in groups of six as was originally contemplated. The departure created a great deal of excitement " . . . signal guns were fired as the fleet passed down the bay . . . Clarks Point was crowded with citizens . . . The Revinue Cutter *Varing* escorted the fleet . . . " Capt. Rodney French of the *Garland* (he was afterwards Mayor of New Bedford) had been appointed "Commodore of the fleet." He wanted the fleet to follow the coast but the majority of the skippers did not agree and sailed straight for Beaufort, arriving well ahead of their "Commodore." Apparently the project took on some aspects of a yacht race. The "Whaleman's Shipping List and Transcript" received a letter from Captain James M. Willis, master of the *Rebecca Simms* indicating that he was the first to arrive (on December 5th) and that the *Kensington* was second, the *Maria Theresa* third and the *L. C. Richmond* fourth.

Although flag-officer S. F. DuPont had been fully advised of the plans of the departure of the whalers, it was apparent that the orders failed to reach Commodore J. S. Missroon, senior officer at Savannah.

Sinking the whalers in Charleston Harbor, *Harper's Weekly*, January 11, 1862.

Missroon wrote to DuPont that "seventeen ships and barks (chiefly old whale vessels) had arrived . . . but few good vessels among them and all badly found in every respect especially in ground tackle, few having more than one chain and anchor, one of the others (the *L. C. Richmond*) no anchor . . . Several, . . . had arrived in a sinking condition." He complained that "having received no information of the coming of these vessels" he had not assumed responsibility for any of them. He reported that the *Meteor* parted her only chain and ran ashore, and the *Lewis* was also ashore and bilged. The *Phoenix* he said had struck bottom in trying to enter the harbor and was leaking and had lost her rudder and in order to prevent her from "sinking where it was desirable she should not" he had her towed to a point where she would make a good breakwater and bridge for landing on Tybee Island in the Savannah River. The *Archer* having stuck three times off Savannah Bar Shoals was leaking badly but still afloat.

Capt. R. B. Smith of the *Phoenix* denied that his ship had sunk "accidentally". He reported "myself and crew sank the *Phoenix* at the time and place designated. Incidentally he criticized Commodore Missroon "unsparingly." Said he "seemed indifferent to the purpose and safety of the fleet" and that "he had been heard to express Southern sympathies and had often spoken of Confederate General Tattnall as being a good fellow".

As has been indicated the original plan was first to block the channel to Savannah but this was abandoned when it was found that the Confederates themselves had already sunk three steamers in the river channel with the idea of preventing access to Savannah by the Union fleet. Flag officer DuPont wrote to Secretary Fox that the Confederate general "Tattnall is doing the work for us . . . I sent word to Missroon to get him word if he could, that we would supply him with half a dozen vessels to help his obstruction of Pulaski . . . "

The plan for sinking was thus changed to Charleston and the "stone fleet" was mobilized at the Port Royal base. Progress was delayed for several days by severe "easterly weather." DuPont was not entirely optimistic but told Fox that if the obstruction " . . . lasts until April it will be worth all the trouble."

Captain Charles Henry Davis, Chief of Staff of the South Atlantic blockading squadron under Captain DuPont, was placed in direct charge of the operation. Capt. Davis had little enthusiasm for the project and wrote to his family on December 2nd, 1861, that " . . . the pet idea of Mr. Fox has been to stop up some of the southern harbors . . . I had always a special disgust for this business . . . I always considered this mode of interrupting commerce as liable to great objections and of doubtful success . . . "

Only ten years before Davis had been in command of a ship surveying these same harbors for planned improvements.

The New York Herald Records The Event

The sinking of the first fleet was finally accomplished December 20th and was referred to as "plugging one of the rat holes." It received a great deal of publicity in the Northern press, perhaps designed to cheer up the people of the North and equally to discourage

the people of the South. Newspaper and magazine correspondents were assigned to cover the project with the fleet, and many pages were filled with picturesque details.

The "Charleston Bar correspondent" of the *New York Herald* on the U. S. gunboat *Ottawa* described the scene thus: . . .

> "After some delay and sundry postponements a portion of the famous stone fleet originally designed to block up the Savannah Harbor but subsequently directed from that point to this is quietly riding at anchor off Charleston Bar this evening while the balance of the number will be here before daylight tomorrow morning at which time we hope to begin hermetically sealing, so far as passage of ordinary craft is concerned, one at least of the four channels.
>
> "It is proposed to scuttle the entire fleet of whalers which will be here tomorrow in the main channel that runs parallel to Morris Island by Cummings Point and thence in a northwest course to Charleston passing under the guns of Forts Sumter and Moultrie and Castle Pinkney . . . "

The reporter's account continues:

> "Yesterday morning we got under way from Port Royal at ten o'clock and stood out for the bar at which time all the whalers had weighed anchor and were slowly moving out under full sails which were scarcely filled by the light westerly breeze. The day was delightful and every indication promised good weather for some days to come.
>
> "The wind was so light that at an early hour it became evident that the old whalers must be towed out over the bar if they were to be got out at all so we latched onto the bark *Fortune* of New London, an ancient hulk that might have been engaged in the blubber business before the Revolution for aught I know, as she looked rusty enough and venerable enough to have claimed a century as her age, and had the claim allowed. Her sails were yellow and her rigging innocent of any coating of tar. At her quarter hung the graceful and fleet whale boats looking as fresh and new as from the builder's hands. These were evidently considered the guns of the ship, though below she had many valuable stones for their purpose. Still with all her want of beauty and the freshness of youth it seemed sad to think she was to be put to so ignominous an end after a long career of usefulness; but she is to go.

"Towing her along at an easy pace we soon passed the bar and Dame *Fortune* came to anchor just outside to wait for the hour of final departure.

"We then ran rapidly back and took in tow the *Rebecca Simms* also of New London and towed her over the bar where she also came to anchor.

"The day was nearly consumed in getting these two vessels out and it was nearly dark when we got the *William Lee,* a fine old ship, safely over the bar where she came to anchor for the night."

During the day, the *Cahawba* with Captain C. H. Davis, on board, was engaged in towing out vessels as were the *Ericsson, Philadelphia, Pettit* (tug), and the *Mohican* and *Pocohontas* (men of war). At nine o'clock sixteen vessels of the "pebble fleet" were on the bar besides two which had come in from the sea belonging to the second stone fleet for Charleston.

During the evening Lieutenant White of the *Ottawa* visited several of the ships, one of which proved to be the *Margaret Scott* of New Bedford belonging to the new stone fleet. She had been seized a short time since on the charge of fitting out as a slaver and condemned, the government buying her and applying her to this purpose. As she is in good order and well fitted out, she was later used in Port Royal as a coal ship.

The night passed quietly enough. At an early hour in the morning the fleet got under way nearly all standing north under sail. The wind was very light and there was little prospect of any of them reaching Charleston Bar in time to begin operations that day and lay at anchor at midnight with only six or seven of the fleet, the balance being somewhere between there and Port Royal with a light breeze to push them in.

The U. S. Naval craft *Cahawba,* towed two up, the *Philadelphia,* two others, and the *Ericsson,* three. The *Mohican, Pocohontas* and the *Ottawa* together with the *Florida, Augusta* and the bark, *Gem of the Seas,* constituting the blockading squadron of this port, formed the naval force to cooperate in the work of scuttling the ships and protecting those immediately engaged from any attack from the rebels.

Sinking of the Stone Fleet in the ship Channel Charleston.
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, January 11, 1862.

Two boats were sent this evening from the *Cahawba* by Captain Davis with Mr. Godfrey the pilot to find the channel and bar and also to discover the bar on which they were to sink the ships. The *Ottawa's* first cutter, properly arrived in charge of Mr. McDougal, master's mate, was sent in to protect the *Cahawba's* boats from a boat attack if one should be attempted. The boats returned after two or three hours' absence after having made some progress in their work. They were ordered to finish soundings in the morning and hoped to begin the work of sinking the ships by noon the next day.

The newspaper report continued:

> "The weather continues most propitious for our work. The nights after the moon rises are sufficiently light to enable us to work o'nights when necessary. The wind is light and off shore and there is scarcely a ripple upon the sea. No better time could be selected for the successful carrying out of an object and if the weather will but continue twenty-four hours longer one channel will be closed. Our guns are cast loose and ready for action tonight and the watch is armed for any emergency."

Thursday, December 19, 1861:

> "We looked in vain this morning for the Charleston light house, a tall white structure on Morris Island which was standing last night. The rebels have evidently destroyed it during the night as they properly feared its use by us as a landmark to guide us into the channel – we can barely make out with glasses the ruins of the building and that serves our purpose quite well. (Captain Davis in reporting to Captain DuPont said this "Essentially promoted" our purpose of this visit to make more difficult blockade running).
>
> "Mr. Godfrey, the pilot, took in two of the *Florida's* cutters this morning and at noon had anchored one on either side of the channel on the bar where we are to sink the hulks.
>
> "We stood to at Capt. Davis' request and anchored inside the bar to protect the boats and drive off the rebels if they should attempt to come down. The day is a little hazy but we can with a glass discern the dim outlines of Fort Sumter and occasionally get a glimpse of the rebel flag flying over it."

While The Confederates Watch, The Stone Fleet Sinks

Morris Island was within two miles and a half of the fleet anchorage, and two rebel batteries could be detected upon it, one near

Light House inlet and a second of immense size upon Cummings Point. A little steamer, probably the *Emma Davis,* flaunting the rebel flag, occasionally ran out during the day from behind Fort Sumter and took a hasty glance at the whale fleet, now all there, before retreating to a safer position under the guns of Moultrie and Sumter, not venturing within two miles.

Continuing the account, the reporter wrote:

> "At half past four this afternoon the tide being nearly full, we recrossed the bar and ran a hawser to the bark *Theodosia* of New London which was to be the first victim and towed her across the bar to the upper boat on the left hand side of the channel. When we had her in a good position, Captain Stevens through a speaking trumpet ordered the captain to ease off the hawser. [This is an error. No *Theodosia* belonged in the fleet. S. W.]
>
> " 'Aye, aye, sir' came the reply and the hawser was let go and roused in again on deck in the twinkling of an eye. The trembling old bark, being under some headway, moved slowly to the exact spot where we wished her and then struck the bottom and her anchor dropped for the last time in the water, the chain rattling out as cheerfully as any chain might which had made its last run and the old hulk settled down into its new grave. The plug had been out as the anchor dropped and the water rushed madly and wildly in; in a moment the whale boats were lowered out alongside and the dunnage of the officers and crew rapidly passed over the bulwarks and into them.
>
> "We did not wait for them but hurried out to tow in another before dark. The first ship touched bottom and the plug was drawn as the sun went down. Each had finished its course at the same moment, one to rise on the morrow as bright and glorious as ever, the other to waste away and go to pieces under the combined action of the elements which it had braved so long and so well. Alas! that a vessel worn out in the service of its owner should be sold and come to such an ignoble end!"

The End of the Voyage for Some Gallant Whaleships.

The *Rebecca Simms* was towed in and anchored at the other side of the channel. As the water filled her hold she sank slowly and in a dignified manner, rolling uneasily to be sure as the water poured in but "going down with every rope and spar in place as a brave man falls in battle with his harness on."

The position of the bar was now more clearly marked out and the *Florida* boats were relieved of their unpleasant positions as buoys and returned to their ship. Their work was reported to Captain Davis and he requested the *Pocohantas* and the *Ottawa* to tow in and sink all the ships after the moon had risen high enough to afford light to see.

At eight o'clock the job was resumed. Four more whaleships were towed in and sunk before low water made it impossible for the loaded ships to be placed in position.

The *Pocohontas* towed in two during the night. While at work the harbor was dotted with the small whale boats, running from their respective ships to the *Cahawba,* carrying away their (the officers' and crews') baggage and the valuable sails and furniture of the ships. Some of the men-of-war boats were engaged in visiting the sunken ships and securing flour, potatoes, onions and other acceptable provisions, rope, furniture, etc., which come very handy on ship-board and thus preventing them from being totally lost with the ships. By midnight most of the ships had been sunk. Some of them were heeled over and the sea flowing on their decks.

The reporter observed that the channel appeared quite well blocked up and "with the eight ships we are to sink tomorrow well placed, it will trouble a pilot boat to go through the Main ship channel, I fancy. Tomorrow morning we begin work again and hope to complete it by noon."

On Friday, December 20, 1861, the *New York Herald's* account carried on the story:

> "At sunrise today we began our labor again. We have towed in and scuttled four ships today and the *Pocohontas* has towed in four which have been sunk and the channel is effectually blockaded. Many of the vessels had been stripped of their sails before they were towed in but several were still unstripped. Captain Davis sent all the whale boats with their crews to these latter boats and they were soon stripped of their sails and valuable cordage which were taken to the *Cahawba.*
>
> "One ship, the *Robin Hood* of Mystic, originally an East Indian and the wonder of her day was selected as a repository for all the sails not worth sending to the North and such cordage and other articles as the enemy would like to obtain.

Cartoon in *Punch,* February 1, 1862.

When ready she was to be burned. During the afternoon the men engaged in cutting away the masts of the ships and at sundown out of sixteen vessels, but one, the *Robin Hood,* was unshorn of her masts and spars.

"I have frequently read of masts going by the board on ships at sea in a gale of wind but never saw the deed performed till today. It is certainly worth witnessing when you have not the accompaniments of a howling gale and a wild mountain of sea and a groaning ship leaking at every joint beneath you. Under those circumstances the cutting away of masts may afford a sense of relief but none of gratification or pleasure. But with a fleet of ships sunk across and blockading an important channel leading to what was once a thrifty city, but what is now the seat of rebellion and an object of just revenge, the dismasting of the hulks within sight of the rebel flags and rebel guns is really an unalloyed pleasure. One feels that at least one cursed rathole has been closed and one avenue of supplies cut off by the

hulks and anything that adds to the efficacy of the work affords additional pleasure. Most of the ships, while sinking, had listed to one side and the masts of course stood at an angle over their sides."

The scene presented in the harbor when the work was done was almost unbelievable. Here were fifteen dismasted hulks in every possible position lying across the channel, some on their port, others on their starboard sides. Some were under water forward, others aft. The sea swept over some of them, others stood on upright keels and spouted water from their sides as the heavy seas raised them and dropped them heavily down upon the sand again. Proudly among them all was the *Robin Hood*, with her graceful tapering masts towering aloft and apparently still afloat.

In the background was Morris Island and the brownish red walls of Sumter and the low walls of Moultrie over which flew a rebel ensign large enough to wrap a ship in. One poor miserable tugboat constituting the rebel fleet in these waters and a small schooner made up the moving objects in the panorama.

At six o'clock this evening fire was applied to the *Robin Hood* and she began to burn brightly but not briskly and it was not until eight o'clock that the mizen mast fell. The ship was burning at midnight and soon after sank at last.

During the two days Forts Sumter and Moultrie have been firing guns at intervals for what purpose or object is now known. "Our work being accomplished we leave for Port Royal tonight," said the reporter.

The New York *Times'* correspondent became quite sentimental; he said, as he saw "ship after ship settle down into the absorbing sand" he could not help feeling a shade of regret and . . .

> "How venerable the doomed things now appeared, short, broad, square sterned, bluff-bowed . . . Queer old tubs with queer fittings-up and quaint names set in elaborate beds of quaint carved work. Yet many of these fossil vessels were celebrated in their time. The fortunes of the Tabers, the Howlands, the Simmses, Swifts, Coffins, Starbucks and many other New England families have been created from their voyages . . . "

The Official Report of the Operation Reveal Scope of Undertaking.

Captain DuPont, in describing the process of sinking the fleet, indicated they were "placed in a checkerboard or indented form, lying as much as possible across the direction of the channel in several lines some distance apart, and they were made so nearly to overlie each other that it would be difficult to draw a line through them in the direction of the channel which would not be intercepted by some of the vessels."

From the other side of the fence Major T. M. Wagner in command at Fort Sumter reported his observation of the project for obstructing the main channel, thus:—

> " . . . On the afternoon of December 18 a large increase in the blockading squadron was observed . . . on the 19th the weather being bad, not much progress was made in the preparations for sinking. A few of the vessels were stripped. By dawn on the morning of the 20th great activity was observed: fifteen vessels were placed in line more or less direct across the main ship channel about 4 miles S. S. E. of Fort Sumter and 3 miles E. S. E. of the light on Morris Island. By evening all had been stripped, dismasted and sunk. From the observation made the vessels appeared to have been placed in a single irregular line with intervals of 100 feet making a distance of about 3500 feet in extent from shoal to shoal and completely occupying the channel. The vessels commenced to settle immediately and at the end of a week but little was to be seen of any of their hulls. They have now (February 12) entirely disappeared. Large portions of the wrecks have from time to time come ashore . . . "

The sinking of the first stone fleet of 17 vessels left eight from this fleet which Captain DuPont reported he "had applied to a very useful purpose." The crews, 250 men, were assigned to the Steamer *Empire State* for shipment back north. They missed the Fall River line steamer at New York and had to stay over a day there, but had a very good time while waiting for the next boat!

The obstruction of the main channel left three other channels giving access to the Charleston Harbor. The most important of these was Moffitts, or Sullivan Island Channel which, recently deepened, had a depth of 12 to 15 feet and proved fairly convenient for blockade runners. This was blocked by sinking the second stone fleet on

January 26th. The weather was far from favorable for this second project and it was delayed by a north-east storm. Three of the fleet parted their chains during the night. Two of these were quickly returned to the scene of operations but the *Peri,* having then no anchors was blown out to sea and was missing for several days but finally reappeared. The weather continued heavy but the project was carried on and though one other craft parted her anchor chain, about half the fleet was sunk the first day. Captain Parrott reported he had a "pretty hard time." He reported that one of the craft with no anchor "drifted away to the Northward and eastward but her plug was gotten out and she must have sunk close in with the coast. She was too near in for the steamer which I sent after her to follow her up."

Captain DuPont was, however, in spite of difficulties, quite satisfied with the disposition of the second fleet and said, "All agree that the work was thoroughly done" although Captain G. B. Balch said, "it may be possible we have not placed them in the exact line desired" on account of the heavy gale. He continued, "I can confidently state that a very great obstruction has been placed between the land and Rattle Snake Shoal and several of the ships have entirely disappeared . . . " Twenty vessels were sunk here.

Major T. M. Wagner from Fort Sumter described the second project

> " . . . On January 20th another fleet came to anchor off this port. They took up their position on a line extending from the entrance of the north channel southwardly to the main ship channel. The vessels were mostly of a smaller class than those of December. They were 14 in number, barks and brigs. They were stripped and towed northwardly to their positions which were on the south edge of the shoal known as the Rattle Snake and opposite the entrance of Maffitt Channel with the exception of one vessel which was placed at the eastern edge of the shoal about two and a half miles east of the other vessels and between the shoal and Long Island Beach.
>
> The line extends from north to south and by measurement 6½ miles E. N. E. of Fort Sumter. The place has been carefully noted on the chart of the harbor at Fort Sumter. The first four vessels to the north of the line were sunk in the western end of the Rattle Snake in shoal waters, the balance in 4 or 5 fathoms out in the track of vessels entering Charleston Harbor by Maffitt's Channel . . . "

Captain S. F. DuPont
(Afterward Rear - Admiral)

Of the 45 vessels purchased for the project sixteen were sunk in the main channel of Charleston, twenty in Maffitt's Channel, four were disabled at Tybee Island, Savannah. Two were assigned as coal vessels and one as store ship. The disposal of the last two vessels is not clear. It is said one of these ended up in Provincetown, Mass.

The rights for stripping were awarded for such portions of the vessels as could be readily salvaged, such as spars, rigging, anchor chain, etc., as the vessels were sunk. There was apparently some competition in this connection. A. F. Prentis of New Bedford, owner of the schooner *Sea Rover,* wrote to his skipper George P. Hinckley " . . . I trust [DuPont] will give us a better chance in the second fleet and perhaps tender you its sails and other savings . . . " Incidentally Captain Hinckley was quite critical of the whole procedure. He reported that the vessels were sunk "too far apart" and that it was "very easy to sail between them."

The Storm of Criticism From Abroad Reflection of Southern Sentiment

The stone fleet project created a great deal of bitter criticism in the Confederacy as well as in England and France, because of the effect which was feared of further interfering with blockade run-

ning, already hampered by the efforts of the Union Navy. General Lee in several bitter messages referred to . . . "feelings unbecoming to a great nation . . . ", He said, "The achievement so unworthy of any nation, is the abortive expression of the malice and revenge of a people, which it wishes to perpetuate by rendering more memorable a day hateful in the calendar."

The southern newspapers teemed with denunciations of the "barbarous act" and frantic calls were made on England to protest against the "violation of the rights of the civilized world."

The *London Times* was full of bitter editorial comment from time to time such as:—

> " . . . People who would do an act like this would pluck the sun out of the heavens and put their enemies in darkness or dry up the rivers that no grass might forever grow in the soil where they had been offended and such acts ought not to be permitted by the guardians of the civilizations of mankind.
>
> " . . . Among the crimes which have disgraced the history of mankind it would be difficult to find one more atrocious than this . . .
>
> " . . . No beligerant has the right to resort to such a warfare.
>
> " . . . In common with the rest of the world we view with horror the attempt to deprive future generations of the blessings which nature has designed for them in the shape of a harbor to protect them against the violence of a tempestuous ocean.
>
> " . . . Such proceedings are indeed acts of war but acts of war against the whole human race and by the intervention of those who represent the civilization of the whole human race they shall be denounced.
>
> " . . . The Federal Government by an act unparalleled in the history of National wars [has] actually endeavored to undo what Columbus has done to shut up from all mankind forever the ports which the great discoverer had opened to the human race and to destroy by artificial impediments the gates by which men of all nations enter and pass out of some millions of square miles of fertile and productive lands.
>
> " . . . If it does not call down universal opposition it is only because this enterprise is believed to be as impossible as its design is exercrable.
>
> " . . . No belligerant has the right to resort to such a symptom of warfare."

At a dinner of the East Chester Agricultural Association a member said he "was sorry to find a mode of warfare had been adopted altogether unknown in past history. A mode far worse than the employment of Red Indians . . . The Harbor of Charleston [has] been destroyed by the Federalists who had thus set themselves to take from mankind one of the bountiful gifts of God."

The Shipowners Association of Liverpool addressed a memoir to Earl Russell of the Foreign Office

> " . . . It has come to the knowledge of the . . . Association through the public print that the Federal Government of the United States have sunk a stone squadron in the main channel of Charleston Harbor. This proceeding cannot fail seriously and permanently to injure the entrance of that harbor. This Association . . . feels called upon as representing an important interest to address your Lordship on the subject . . . "

The Foreign office replied that Lord Lyon (The British Ambassador at Washington) had been

> "Told that such a cruel plan would seem to imply dispair at the restoration of the Union . . . and could only be adopted as a measure of revenge and irremediable injury against an enemy . . . and that even as a scheme of embittered and sanguinary war such a means would not be justified. It would be a plot against the commerce of all maritime nations and against the free intercourse of the Southern States of America with the civilized world. It is a worthy project only of times of barbarians."

In London *Punch,* appeared a cartoon representing Uncle Sam, dressed as an Indian waving a copy of the New York *Herald* and gloating over devastated Charleston. The *Herald* had said in an editorial in its issue of December 26th, 1861 that

> " . . . Charleston, so far as any commerce is concerned except that in small coastwise vessels, may be considered 'up country' " and that "The tall spire of St. Michael's which for a century has guided the sailor far out at sea and even before he could distinguish the low coast line, to steer for the welcome harbor will warn him now as he passes by, of sunken wreckage and quick sands which forbid his approach to the ruined city."

Punch, undoubtedly with the N. Y. *Herald's* comment in mind, described, "the manners, habits, and destinies of the American Tribe of I. O. U. Indian [who] delights in safe mischief [and whose] exul-

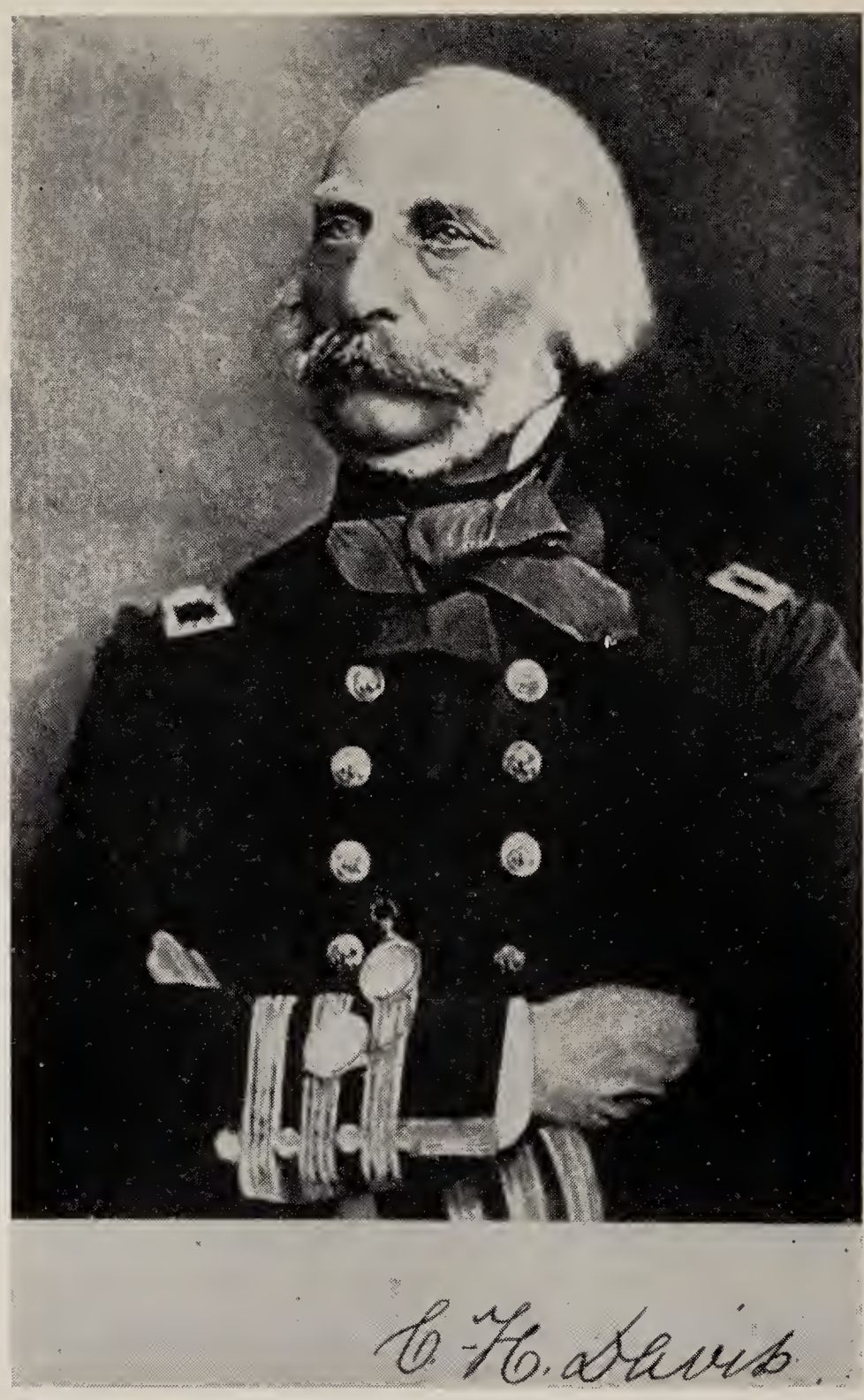
tation at burning a house or choking up a harbor is very demonstrative. He has acquired the name I. O. U. from his latest expedients to raise money when refused it by bankers . . . "

The Secretary of State Replies Diplomatically

Mr. Seward, Secretary of State who apparently felt it necessary to conciliate the British as well as the French (who had also been very rigorous in their protests and criticisms) said it was "Altogether a mistake" to suppose that the plans had been devised with a view to injure Charleston Harbor permanently: that the obstruction was only a temporary measure adopted to aid the blockade. He said there had "not been a complete filling up of Charleston Harbor" and that "no more stones would be sunk there." Seward pointed out to Lord Lyon that between the obstructed channels there still remained two (the Smash and part of Maffitt's) neither of which had been obstructed. He did point out, however, that in making these explanations he "was not to be understood as conceding to foreign states the right to demand them." As a matter of fact the most optimistic prediction, outside fantastic press comments, was that the obstructions would be effective for not more than a short time.

The Confederates, in spite of their vituperations against the Union, had in their own minds, projects for obstructing their own harbors and rivers. The *Norfolk* (Virginia) *Day Book* said

> " . . . We have no large fleet to meet [the Yankees] . . . but we have, nevertheless, many ways left us by which we can thwart their plans . . . Among and perhaps the most prominent among them is the proposed obstruction of our rivers. By a failure to do all in this direction which it is in our power to do we shall certainly allow the Lincoln navy to secure its ends . . . *We are glad that this subject of properly obstruction the rivers and harbors has not been altogether lost sight of*, and attention to it has not been as general as we think necessary under the circumstances. We should like to see the plan accepted by General Lee for the obstruction of the rivers and harbors of Georgia and South Carolina adopted by all others in charge of our defenses and speedily put into operation . . . "



Captain Charles H. Davis.

As has been said, the Confederates had sunk some vessels in the river leading to Savannah, thus anticipating the efforts of the Union Navy, and they had also blocked the entrance to the Norfolk Navy Yard. Leslies' Weekly in its issue of December 28th, 1861, said:—

> "Our readers will perceive from the sketches we publish in the present paper, that the rebels have not waited for the stone fleet to seal up the Port of Savannah but have anticipated the punishment by sinking vessels themselves. This has been done with the three-fold object of protecting Fort Pulaski, the mosquito fleet commanded by Com. Tattnall and to prevent the National Navy from ascending to the city . . . "

Historical Counterparts Were Noted

The Northern press took delight in digging up historical instances of obstructing harbor channels. Sir Walter Scott's *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte* was quoted with some glee. In connection with the Napoleonic Wars, he had written: " . . . Unable to get opportunities of assailing French vessels [England] was induced to have recourse to strange . . . hostilities. Such was the attempt at destroying the harbor of Boulogne by sinking in the roads ships loaded with stones."

The *New York Herald* quoted an order from Downing Street dated February 9th, 1804 from Lord Hobart to Sir A. S. Hammond, controller of the British navy . . . "It being thought advisable under the present circumstances of the war that an attempt should be made for carrying into execution the project suggested in the enclosed paper for choking up the entrance into the harbor of Boulogne . . . I have the King's command to signify to you that you take these preparations under your immediate control and that you communicate with him – supplying him with such funds and giving him such orders for the purchase of vessels and providing materials which you may judge necessary . . . " It was also pointed out that in 1807 the British sank "five vessels laden with stone" at Alexandria in Egypt under Admiral Lewis . . .

Another example to indicate that the British had not been behind hand in developing harbor obstructions was dug up by the Philadelphia *Bulletin* which quoted a report from the United States Commission chosen to examine the Savannah River and Harbor in 1853 as follows" . . . Above Four Mile Point, the channel is deep until we come to those wrecks, fifteen miles above Tybee and two miles below the City Exchange. They form the most serious impediment to the navigation of the lower river . . . The wrecks at this point were sunk during the Revolution (1779) by direction of the English forces then in possession of Savannah. To block the entrance . . . as a protection against the approach of the French and American fleets . . . " [The ships sunk here were the *Rose*, man-of-war, the *Savannah*, armored ship, the *Venus* and two or three transports.]

It was also pointed out that when the Norfolk Navy Yard was seized by the Confederates under General Taliaferro on April 21st 1861 the hull of the old U. S. S. *United States* which had been aban-

doned by the U. S. Navy at Gosport, near the Navy Yard at Norfolk was towed down the Elizabeth River and moored and sunk in the channel a mile below Norfolk.

During the American Revolution the British who occupied Newport, Rhode Island for a time "Sank a frigate and a sloop between Goat and Rhode Island and four transports in the south entrance to the inner harbor at Goat Island" to guard against direct attack from the sea by the French Navy, and during the British occupation of New York City it was reported " . . . that they are under so much fear of a visit from our allies that they have laden 20 large ships with stone ready to sink in the channel way at Sandy Hook on the shortest notice of a [French] fleet appearing to attack them . . . " Fortunately the diversion of the French fleet to the West Indies made the carrying out of this plan unnecessary.

The Operation Was Not A Success.

In spite of the optimism of the commentators of the North and the pessimism in England that the blocking of Charleston Harbor would effectively and permanently prevent ingress and egress and would relegate Charleston to the status of an "up country" community it appears that the effectiveness such as it was, was short-lived, for on May 11, 1862 Mr. C. D. Boutelle of the Coast Survey reported that " . . . Twenty-one feet at low water may be carried passing north of the shoal and south of the southern-most wreck"; and in 1863 the U. S. Engineering Department reported that " . . . Nothing in shape of channel obstruction . . . could prevent or seriously retard the passage of our fleet up to Charleston . . . " The coast survey soundings for 1863 made in great detail do not indicate the slightest vestige of sunken wrecks in any of the Harbor Channels of Charleston, so the stone fleet thus presumably had completely disappeared long before the end of the war. The project was technically a failure, and it is believed that the stone-filled hulks sank so deeply in the mud that they subsequently actually deepened the channels which they were intended to obstruct so effectively.

Notes on the Author

Sidney Withington, author of these articles on two unusual episodes in whaling history, has been a member of the Marine Historical Association for a number of years and has continually been interested in the progress of Mystic Seaport. He was born in Boston and is a graduate of Harvard as well as the School of Engineering at that University.

Mr. Withington retired from active business life after more than forty years with the New Haven Railroad, where he served as Chief Electrical Engineer. He has written numerous technical and historical articles over the years.

Formerly a vice president of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, he is also a member of the Board of Governors of the New Haven Colony Historical Society and is a member of the Newcomen Society.

He is the co-author of the volume "Engineering in History", published last year by McGraw-Hill, one of "two hundred best and most important" books selected recently for presentation to the White House Library by the American Booksellers' Association. He retains membership in the Visiting Committee of the Department of Engineering and Applied Physics at Harvard, is a Fellow and member for life in the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, and an Associate Fellow at Jonathan Edwards College, Yale University.

Mr. Withington's translation of Marestier's *Memoir on American Steamboats* was published by the Marine Historical Association last year. It was the first time this little-known classic on the early history of American steam vessels was ever presented in English in book form, and the translation has been met with favor by reviewers and received with appreciation by all interested in the maritime history of our country.

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Sidney Withington.

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